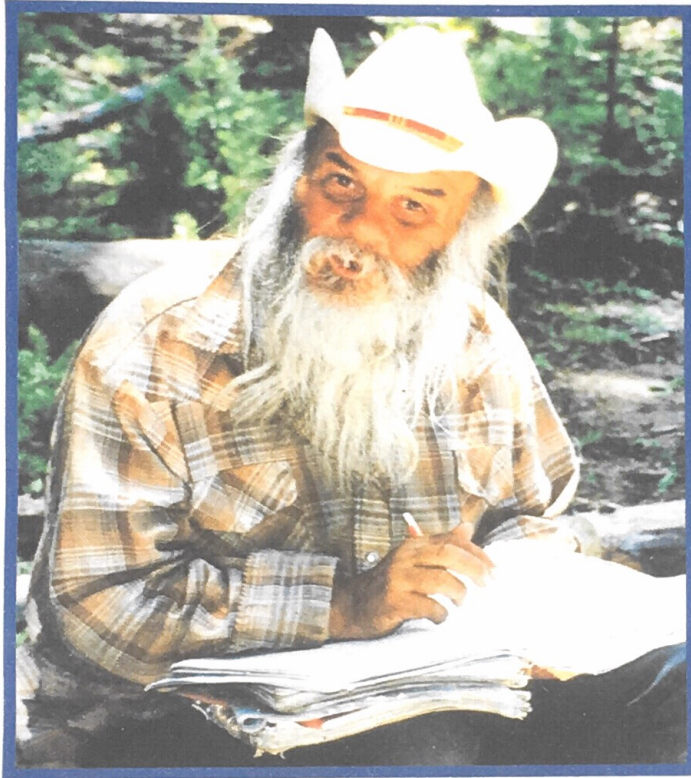


# Rainbow Family Life Stories



*by Jodey Bateman.  
Interviews with Rainbow  
Family of Living Light  
folks conducted between  
1977 and 2008.*

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05.F JAYSUN - "I'm Still a Warrior"  
[3 of 3]

20 pages

[05.F]



(66)

back gladly after the gathering.

We lived for a couple of weeks in Luna, New Mexico, after the gathering. While we were there, Shawn rode his bicycle for the first time and caught his first fish. Nobody would rent to us in Luna. We had to move to Alpine for the job and rent a place. Feather didn't want

to move to Alpine. I don't think she wanted me to get that job.

Alpine was too much like Luna and she was already getting restless.

Just before Christmas, 1979, I had a whole busload, 25 wild, rowdy crazy guys taking them home to Tucson on furlough. One of them climbed out the back door and split. If the administration had given me any shit, I would have said, "You put two of us on the bus or let me lock the back door,"— I couldn't because of fire safety. So

I don't consider it a loss on me. I got everybody delivered to all their parents, but here's this one guy who's being released who says, "Listen, I'm gonna hang out a bit before I call my mom." So I took him to a restaurant and bought him lunch.

So his mom came, picked him up, picked me up too. I smoked pot with the kid outside the house. We ate Christmas cookies and drank brandy. I washed dishes for his mom. There was a mutual attraction. I stayed the night. It wasn't an affair, but it could have been.

When I had kids on the van, it looked real official, red lights, antennas. I had four radios. I could talk to any cop in the world. I'd walk the kids through stores for a coke or ask them to help wash the van. These guys were blown away. Some of them hadn't been able to walk free for two or three years. They were too blown away to escape. It's like when you're doing acid, you're too busy to steal anything.

One time I had dropped everybody off for furlough, I had been partying. I got out of the van with my long hair. This middle aged dude could see my long hair and he could see DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS on the van. He said, "What are you doing, transporting prisoners? You ever have to get rough with them? Are you a black belt?"



(67)

It felt like he really wanted that kind of power over people and he fantasized about it.

It was hard for me at the reform school because so often the kids were sent back to the same problems when they got out - like somebody on the block gunning for them. I realized that I still wasn't working on the real problems of society, dig?

When some kids had broken out in 1978 and killed somebody at that time the guy who was director of juvenile for the whole state got kicked up to chief of corrections - adult and juvenile. That incident in Alpine had put a black mark on his name, so he had a vendetta against the institution. When he got higher up, he just exercised his new powers and shut the institution down. It was definitely the most enlightened youth correctional program in the Southwest.

A lot of individuals wanted to help the kids, but a bureaucracy like that is interested only in self-perpetuation. Given all the rules that we had to follow and the lack of funding and the fact we didn't have enough people and enough time, it was very frustrating. For one of the few times in my life, that job put me in touch with the inner city ghetto. There had been one black person in my high school and it was like a 2,000 student body. I gained so much compassion at the reform school job for the Chicano people, if nothing else. The program closed March 10, 1980.

[The first six months that Jayson was working at the reform school, he was also involved in preparations for the Arizona Gathering.]

JAYSON The 1979 Arizona Gathering - I'll always remember those early forays out from Luna walking in the snow, sometimes cross-country skiing and looking over the rim of some amazing bluff into a narrow canyon below, doing the site find.

After the 1977 New Mexico Gathering, which we had - how to say? - sponsored? - we were hoping and



thinking that someone else out of Tucson or Flagstaff would take the handle for the communications for the gathering. The whole thing for New Mexico had gone through our house two years before. I was working at that steady job at the reform school honor camp. We were finally kind of settling down, getting off the road and raising our children. We were getting to know our neighbors. We liked the country a lot.

We were kind of surprised and honored again - when various brothers and sisters started coming to our place saying, "Hey, nobody else is doing anything."

So we wrote some letters to people around Arizona that we knew asking them to start scouting in earnest and we started scouting in our area. The Arizona Gathering occurred only 100 miles from where the New Mexico Gathering happened two years earlier. I think a lot of people were real infatuated with that area. It's hard for me to separate those gatherings, because we were in Luna both times and in both cases we went through the build-up of energy, people coming through our house some of the pre-gathering craziness.

We had people coming through our house about the Arizona Gathering from September, 1978, as we were just resting up from the Oregon Gathering. Once Feather, Tracy, and Shaun and I were sitting at the table, just the four of us and Feather said she realized it had been months since we had sat down to eat without other people there.

I'm as given to community as I am to commune as I am to a close-knit nuclear family unit, and I've done all three and if our nuclear family unit was growing into a gathering, all that was fine. All we hoped for was bigger facilities, or better weather for a camp.



to town and get drunk and crash cars that you borrowed from other people and do all this weird, really less than honorable shit. If we are recognizing ourselves as long term, committed, devoted and loving family members then we also gotta acknowledge our responsibility to more honorable actions."

At the gathering, Carlos and Freedom and those guys were running the supply scene. Everybody that year kind of came early and set up their scam. Carlos made himself supply guy and he and Mario and all those guys, they're the only ones in camp that got jelly beans. They're the only ones in camp that got peanut butter. They're the only ones in camp that got good dope all the time. You know that's telling you something. When it rains, they don't get wet. And they came with nothing to the gathering, so hey, where did all that shit come from? They're high-grading. And they always got gas in their private vehicles, not the town run gathering supply. Like come on, guys.

The family. Said, "Jayson, you got a bus. You found the site. You know all the law enforcement. You know all the press and you know most of the local ranchers and farmers. You live here. You've worked here for years. Get your bus, bro. Set it right at that spot at the intersection of Forest 141 and Forest 52 and do the welcome center - at least start it."

And it made sense to me. I loved the idea. I said "Fair out, great." And I was only hoping to do what I do well. If you work in the welcome center or the parking lot or in town, you have to come back in and touch the real



heart of the gathering. Feather and I had been doing that one day. We spent the day doing a sweat and OMing in a circle and working in a kitchen. That evening we played music and went back to our bus and there was this other bus, unknown to us, directly across the trail, 30 feet from ours, with someone we'd never known before, Stephen Principle.

I didn't mind that, except that he was part of a whole other energy. There was an immediate challenge of how we'd been welcoming people home. We had been doing "welcome home, brother and sister," and he was asking for dope and gas money. There were arguments over there occasionally. Again, I emphasize, 30 feet out of our bus when we had the only other bus. There was an animosity between us and Stephen at first.

A poached cow was being consumed by people at his bus with great glory and pride. It was like the warriors come back from the hunting expedition and they were happy, they were joyous, they were eating the cow that got rustled and it was fire and celebration. It was not considered a wrongful act at all, but like the great hunters had succeeded. It was at Stephen's camp in front of his bus.

It was sad. It was like such a dichotomy. There's always yin and yang, good and bad and down and in and out. And it was perfect. Here was what we imagined to be a relatively light and positive and welcoming and nurturing energy in our bus scene and many people were rotating to our bus, helping with that. And here's this heavy meat and guns and



argumentive energy across the path on the other side. Here's the trail, the main entrance to the gathering, and on each side are the two pillars of reality - light and dark. It was not lost on me.

Clay was a jewel - bringing us a truck to use for the Arizona Gathering, with that cap turned backward on his head. He had a lot of energy to give. He got burnt out and so did I.

There was so much magic at Arizona, too, but... Arizona ate me up. Arizona consumed me personally, and I think Feather, to a degree. I was burnt out all frazzled & crisp at that gathering, more than I have at any gathering before or since. I think Feather was having aversions to stability and I was moving toward stability.

Then I had an affair. I think it was a symptom of something we were both experiencing, called the seven year itch. I think most couples go through that in a high-energy situation.

The Arizona gathering kind of turned me around. Next year, 1980, I was committed to getting some land near Pleasanton, New Mexico, the fulfillment of our hippie dream. Feather said, "To hell with that," and went off to the West Virginia Gathering while I didn't go. The land deal was about to go through and someone had to be there in New Mexico to show good faith and do the paperwork.

But it is so incredibly energizing to be honored with being part of the gathering. You can get so exposed to so many far-out things, you begin to think that's what life is, and a life at home becomes a very mundane



thing. We moved on the land in September, 1980, when Feather came back from West Virginia.

As a Californian, I felt me and my family were refugees from heaven in New Mexico. We were looking for a home. Squatting, rent-paying, care-taking, we'd done about everything you could do. I'd been a ranch foreman. I'd been a forest worker so I could live in a forest.

We had a number of friends in an extremely remote area on the Blue River some miles from Alpine, who worked for the Forest Service and we got to know them while working with the Forest Service people on the Arizona Gathering. We became much closer friends with one of the couples after the gathering while still living in Alpine, and eventually they approached me with an offer to buy land together. This place in Pleasanton, New Mexico, was the first place we looked at. I had hitch hiked there and looked at the place a year almost to the day before I met these guys. They invested in the land with us. We would be meeting payments for ten years.

I was thinning trees that fall, 1980. I spent Halloween with Howard Hutchinson, our neighbor, at 9,000 or 10,000 feet in the snow.

[In the spring of 1981, Jared, Jayson's son by Leah, visited him for the first time. They met at the San Francisco Hot Springs, two miles south of Jayson's land.]

JAYSON

I thought Leah would find someone as soon as we broke up, but my son Jared has been raised without a father figure. Leah raised him well.

I hadn't seen Jared since he was three months old.



74

There were a couple of letters, a couple of phone calls. Then I heard that he wanted to see me. Feather and I left word that we would be at the hot springs. I was coming out of the hot springs and there was this young man, a very serious, very adult-like eleven years old. Have you ever looked at your own eyes in a mirror? There was this vibration.

[Next year in the summer of 1982, Jared came to see Jayson and told me these things about himself.]

JARED I was born June 16, 1970. My bar mitzvah will be on my thirteenth birthday. My reading for it will be the one that starts, "Judah is a lion's cub."

My earliest memory is when I was about two when my mom and I lived in Taos on what was called the Rim where a cliff is like a 70 foot cliff. I used to be real fascinated by the cliff, mostly by the birds. I used to climb down the cliff, mostly to watch the birds. My mom, she was real afraid that I would get hurt, so she built a fence to keep me away from the cliff and out of the road. It didn't work. The second day the fence was there, I climbed over it and I climbed down the cliff. I've always been good at climbing, although my mom bitterly complains about it.

My mom has always been a psychologist. I know enough about psychology to know what she's doing, but it doesn't bug me. Her dad was murdered when she was 17, and my grandma married a boxer. I think he's a Jew, like my grandma. He's very nice and I like him a lot.

My dad is Jayson. My mom told me a lot about him when I asked - which was all along. She didn't tell me why they split up. We went on a trip once to Warm Springs, where they used to live. It was absolutely demolished - bulldozed. My mom says she



(75)

was pretty sad about it. It was getting to me, having a father that I'd never met. Some of my school friends would make fun of me about not having a father. I didn't care about what they said. That's life.

[For a while Jared attended the Taas Learning Center, founded by John Kimmey, a white member of the same peyote meeting as Phil Coyote. Kimmey also helped set up the Covenant School in Silver City, New Mexico, where Jared's brother Shawn went to school for a few months.]

JARED

In the fourth grade I went to the Taas Learning Center. It was a good experience. We did a lot of things like adobe huts, construction working-planning things. It cost \$100 a month. John Kimmey, we didn't exactly call him the principal. We just called him John. He's a friend of my mom's. He's a real nice guy.

I think 12 kids lived at the Center. I stayed at home, because it cost \$500 a month to live there. We were always cleaning the place up just to keep it looking good. I made a little amphora at the Center - a vase with a wide opening and narrow neck and a wide bottom. We found the clay ourselves and transported it. Shaping the amphora was mighty difficult, but using the potter's wheel was easy. I learned how to fix car motors at the Learning Center about halfway, but I didn't complete the course. I had to leave the Center. I forget why.

To my opinion, the Learning Center was at least five times better than regular school. It was very hard to fit back into regular school. The teachers in regular school are so strict. If you're conferring with another kid about a question the teacher told you to confer about,



(76)

and you laugh at another kid's mistakes, they'll make you stay in for recess. The teachers in Taos are mostly Spanish and they have a prejudice against you if you're Anglo.

My mom is studying a PSHS - Professional Skill for Humanistic Studies - in San Diego now. I like Taos for its space and ruralness and I like San Diego better for recreation. I joined the D and D club in San Diego -

Dungeons and Dragons. It's at least the best game I've ever played. The school work in San Diego is a lot harder and more strict. I don't like that.

About the past three years I've taken this kind of course or that kind of course in the summer, sometimes music - beginning piano. I didn't like it, but I can play some stuff. We don't have a piano I can practice on any more.

I took Bible, Old and New Testaments, at a Presbyterian church because there's no synagogues in Taos. I'm studying for bar mitzvah in San Diego in a person's house, a rabbi. I never learned his real name. Hebrew is confusing, but I like it. Judaism means a lot to me - a whole life style. You can't eat shellfish or pork. I eat them anyway. I don't eat pork except for bacon. We celebrate Passover, Yom Kippur, the works. The hardest thing for me at Yom Kippur is not eating breakfast.

My mom won't let me play baseball or football. She thinks it's too hazardous. The only sport she will buy equipment for is soccer. I'm not good at organized sports, but I like them anyway. I was in the Del Mar Triathlon in San Diego. We ran ten miles, swam one mile and biked 15 miles. I was the youngest boy in it. I came in fourth out of 200 and my girlfriend was third. Next year I'm joining our school football team.

Amunm Taos who died left me 6 horses in his will. I don't



have any idea why he was our landlord. I guess he just liked me. I've never ridden them. I've got to get to know them pretty well.

When I first heard my father wanted to see me, I was nervous. I came with my mom. I had never seen any pictures or nothing. My mom didn't tell me what my dad was like—just who he was. I kind of expected a house in a meadow. Living in a bus surprised me a lot. I can't say it disappointed me. I found my brother Shawn was happy to see me, but he was jealous because of the attention I got from my dad.

I was nervous about seeing my father, so I don't blame him for being nervous about seeing me. Now that I've met him, I like him. He's kind and honest. I'm with him for a month. It's the longest I've ever been away from my mom. I was worried that I wouldn't be able to last that long, because I've only been away from my mom for one and a half weeks before. That was when I was visiting my dad last year.

I've had hay fever for three years. This year I've had asthma. I left my asthma breather behind when I came to see my dad this year. I just worry about it once in a while.

I don't really want to go to the Rainbow Gathering because I want to spend as much time as possible with my mom. She's been having a lot of chases so I haven't been seeing a lot of her lately.

I don't intend to smoke pot. In the job I intend to take up, I would probably get court-martialed. I want to be in the Air Force Reserves. I would be willing to fight as long as I'm not carrying any nuclear weapons.



I'm kind of doing it for my own good, because my life hasn't been very hard. I just need the discipline. I like action movies - you know, war movies. In school I do reports on the Air Force in Vietnam, but I don't really get it - the Reds and all that. I read all the books and I don't understand them. It just confuses me.

[Dared did not have a bar mitzvah. At 1988 he is a senior in high school and his main interest is photography.]

JAYSUN (continued) After the Washington Gathering in 1981, we hitch hiked to Spokane and Seattle and then to Rainbow Farm and then we rode to the Paiute Indian Sun Dance in Nevada. We had been invited as tribal representatives. I'd like to be sitting there squatting around a fire again.

It was great traveling to the Sun Dance with Barry and Garrick and meeting Tibor there and Rome. It seems painful for me to recollect that stuff because it feels so distant - like a love affair you haven't gotten over yet. I've told about the awe of the Sun Dance in the Native American studies class I took in college in 1986. We were allowed to witness the piercing of the dancers' chests and to take part in the song in support of the dancers who were pierced. We did weep. I stood there with the song this and feeling it so deeply. Tears filled my eyes.

Whites were not allowed to go to the big sings that they held at night. I was one night asked - which was an honor - to man the front gate, keep the coffee and the fire going.

It took a lot of emotional energy to describe in class what happens in a Sun Dance. The Sun Dance



(79)

was such an asexual vibe. For one that didn't come from that culture, it pervaded the scene without announcing itself. A lot of vanity was put asides. [After the Sun Dance, Jay Sun and Feather came back to New Mexico. Jay Sun got a job as an ironworker, which has interest for what it shows of the effect work which is organized exactly the opposite of Rainbow has on the workers]

After a long time without any real employment, we got to a place where our tires were bald and our rice and bean stash was getting low. I got a job as an ironworker building a copper smelter for Bechtel in Silver City - maybe the second largest smelter in the world. I was a star and I can say it straight-out for one simple reason that I spent so many years in the country earning poor wages and having to work hard for that, so when I started making \$16 an hour at Bechtel, I felt I had to work hard. Everybody else was spoiled, sitting around and complaining.

I was up walking on eight to twelve inch wide beams 180 feet above the ground. The danger was nothing. I got into the job. I was outrageous. I wore scarfs, rainbow suspenders, anti-war buttons feathers, sunglasses on upside down.

It was a capitalist trip. Nobody had any involvement in what we were actually building. Nobody wanted to care. If you did care, you were a dummy. There was no craft no skill, no pride. If you worked hard and fast you made the others look bad. I saw guys work harder at getting out of work than the work they were trying to get out of. "It's an hour and a half till dinner. Let's knock off."



Another one of the donors was the graffiti NIGGERS SUCK - CHICANOS SUCK - people hating people. I'd put neat stuff down under the graffiti - quickie-trickie comebacks.

I was like a trained monkey with no leash but a pay check leash called a pay check. Feather didn't understand it, but I'd come home from Bechtel just vibrating, feeling like I'd been raped. And I didn't understand it. I was supposed to be happy. After all, I had a \$600 pay check.

Gary Bechtel, the main man in charge, became one of my good friends. It turns out he was 37. He grew up in the same area that I did. We talked about the areas we used to water ski. I avoided talking about the job with him. He was an ironworker for three years.

I had to join the union to work at Bechtel. All it did for me was take my money. It was like extortion. Unions have changed. They're just a part of management. Joe Hill would turn over in his grave. A lot of the other guys liked the union. They said it would help them get a job anywhere, it provided lots of retirement benefits. But I didn't want to be a professional ironworker for 20 years.

I got ripped off. It was right before Christmas 1981, and it was cold. I went to a fancy restaurant with two guys who worked for Bechtel and two ladies - one of them also worked for Bechtel. One of the guys was Armando, a close friend, and the other was Mario, also a good man.

When we went to get our jackets and leave, we found mine and Mario's jackets had been stolen. My jacket was a beautiful denim jacket, fleece-lined. My parents had brought it for me - the only thing they ever bought me that fit.

It was a coat and tie type place. The only people we saw who could have stolen the jackets were five ironworkers in the bar section. I worked with them. I won't call them friends.



my union brothers.

We took the ladies home regrettably and went to the motel where these guys lived. Armando and I did like a commando type raid on their room. We just walked in and started looking for our jackets. There were three guys there and they got pissed off and told us to leave. Armando and I both have combat experience and we adopted this vibration that we were there for good, for keeps, for real and if they wanted to fight, it would get very serious and we just wanted our jackets.

We searched the room and didn't find the jackets, so we went to a local dance hall to look for the other guys. An ironworker friend of mine told me one of them had been there and gone. He told me where he was staying.

We went to the place, out in the country. Armando opened the door and I stood to one side in case the guy had a .357. We went in. The guy was in bed. We asked for our jackets and he started telling us bullshit and lies. I got really pissed off and threw him against the wall. It's not my nature to do that.

He let us have Marro's jacket, but when I asked about mine, he kept saying "I don't know," till I believed him. Where was my jacket? We went back to the motel. We found the other guy had a separate room from where the other guys were. We went in and turned on the lights. He was in bed. He told us to get out. Marro flipped him over and did a half Nelson on him. I searched the room and found my jacket. This was one of the guys who was the most hateful about the job, who said "Bechtel sucks" the most.

Next day at work was interesting. There was about ten guys who were friends of those guys watching us, expecting us to have a fight scene in retribution.



I was just glad to have my jacket back. I think those guys learned something about grace with power.

That job was the first hit of mainstream America I had had since the military. It was a nightmare, the changes in the plans that happened before our eyes. They'd hire 60 carpenters and the next day they'd lay off 30. The next week they'd be laying off 120 electricians, then they'd be looking for electricians and hire 60 a week later.

They built a seven-story deep primary crusher in which all the ore goes in at ground level and comes out crushed from seven stories down. When they were building the main concrete structure in the ground, somebody made a decision to change the plans, so when they finally finished it and fired it up on a test, they got one-foot wide cracks in the two-foot thick concrete walls.

You know what happened? When they got down to the proper depth, they hit water in the rock. So they decided to raise the whole structure ten feet - put ten feet of dirt on the top and fill the hole in ten feet - but they filled the hole in with the wrong stuff, so it was like building a castle on sand. They had to spend another six months repairing it and who knows how many million dollars.

I don't like the copper smelter. The crusher can take other kinds of metal besides copper. James Watt is there on the Gila-mineral exploration. The truck traffic in Southwest New Mexico has doubled.

[A couple of months after Jayson and Feather left on the 1982 Idaho Gathering, they broke up.



(83)

Jayson stopped going to the national Rainbow Gathering although he helped put on a children's gathering in June, 1983, near Crestone, Colorado. In the fall of 1983, he stopped buying the land in New Mexico.

In 1986 Jayson started to Sangamon State College in Springfield, Illinois. He dropped out after a semester and got a job guiding tours through Abraham Lincoln's house. These are some of his thoughts in April, 1988. ]

JAYSON It wasn't the external problems of Rainbow that ever bothered me. When we had external problems, I was cool, calm and capable. That's why I was looked to by my brothers and sisters. But the continuous internal Rainbow Family problems slowly broke my heart.

But still, I can never forget a Rainbow prayer circle where prayers were actually said for Reagan. And I could dig it - prayers for his sanity, his balance, because he's in that chair and we can't get rid of him, at least for now.

When I first got to Springfield, I could discuss Rainbow easily, but now all that's farther away from me. It's painful. I used to be able to do nothing all day and not be wasting time. Oh, I did things, but it wasn't a regular job routine. I run on four hours sleep a night - and that's rough when you've got a steady job. I can do that at a gathering, but a gathering gives you energy back. A job gives you money, but not energy.



If I hadn't gone through the gatherings, I would not have this job guiding tours. The gathering helped me immensely to learn to speak in public.

I've been to some sweat lodges here in Springfield. I feel there's purpose to what I'm doing here. The only thing I regret is that the purpose here seems more individual and not working for the greater whole.

Where are the wild horses? Where are the chain saws? Where are the sweat lodges and the long nights on the river? That world is getting further and further from me here. I can hardly live here in Illinois. The spirit of the land is not here — it's all cultivated. Maybe the spirit is here, but I'm not of it.

[Jay Sun and his girlfriend Gina and his son Shawn went to the 1989 Gathering in Nevada. The year before, the gathering site in Texas was criss-crossed by a network of dirt roads, so there was a lot of police harassment at the Texas Gathering. These are his comments in September, 1989.]

JAYSUN My first reaction was that after the Texas Gathering that people had decided to pick a spot that was so remote that the cops wouldn't even try to ride in on horseback. We got to the Nevada Gathering on the night of July sixth. We were on that dreadful road, three miles from the parking lot and a guy passed us going out in a van with trip poles on the back. He reached his hand out of his van window and I reached mine out and touched his hand and I could feel how the gathering had been. It was like passing the torch on. I yelled "Yahoo!"



(85)

We got to the parking lot, and I removed a few stones so I could park the car. Then Shawn started to laugh and said "Welcome home!" and I saw somebody squatting and taking a shit in the parking lot.

I was almost embarrassed at my homecoming when we got to the bottom of the trail. All these people remembered me and kept mentioning my name. I don't think of myself as a celebrity. When you're working with God's tools you don't want to take credit because He's where it comes from.